

GEORGIAN



YOUR COLLEGE • YOUR FUTURE

2006/07 ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005*¹ is to develop, implement and enforce accessibility standards in order to improve opportunities and accessibility for persons with disabilities, thus guaranteeing their full participation in society. The purpose of the Annual Accessibility Plan is to educate and assist Georgian College staff in the identification, removal and prevention of barriers with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises at all College locations.

The AODA requires each college and university to prepare an annual accessibility plan that addresses a broad range of accessibility issues, taking into account the full definition of disability under the AODA and the Ontario Human Rights Code. Each college and university must consult with people with disabilities in the preparation of this plan and make the plan public.

Customer Service and Transportation are the first of the AODA Standards Development Committees to be formed. Georgian College will focus on these priorities for the next four years. Currently, the Customer Service and the Transportation Standards Development Committees (CS-SDC and T-SDC) are in the final stages of developing standards in their respective areas. Once these standards are approved by the Minister of Community and Social Services, they become law. Once law, the College must implement these standards by the dates specified in each standard, by each committee. However, until such time, the College is obligated to uphold the Human Rights Code regarding accessibility. The Centre for Access staff will continue to monitor and update Senior Administration on new standards as they are developed.

¹ http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/05a11_e.htm accessed May 30,2006

Accessibility Planning: Commitment, Vision, and Intent

Georgian College has three main campuses and four regional campuses located throughout Central Ontario. The College is committed to continually improving access to all College premises, facilities, and services.

The aim of Georgian's annual Accessibility Plan is to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities and establish priorities for future accommodations. An accessibility audit template has been developed and training sessions will be developed for various stakeholder groups.

As Georgian College strives to be recognized provincially, nationally and internationally as a leader in postsecondary education, we will continue to be responsive to government priorities. Through our staff, students, alumni, Advisory Committee members and other community stakeholders, we will work collaboratively on accessibility plans.

Overview – Barriers to Accessible Customer Service

The Initial Proposed Customer Service Standard (CS-SDC Draft 3 – April 25, 2006) has identified the following:

Principles of Accessible Customer Service

In achieving accessible customer service for persons with disabilities, persons or organizations providing goods or services in the Province of Ontario shall incorporate the following core principles into their customer service policies, processes and practices:

- **Equity:** Customer services for persons with disabilities shall be provided in a manner which is inclusive and equitable;
- **Independence:** Customer services for persons with disabilities shall support their independence, while respecting their right to safety and personal privacy;
- **Dignity:** Customer services for persons with disabilities shall be provided in a manner that respects the dignity of persons with disabilities;
- **Responsiveness:** Customer services for persons with disabilities shall be responsive to their needs;
- **Sensitivity:** Customer services for persons with disabilities shall be provided in a manner that is sensitive to their needs; (2006).

The Customer Service Standards Development Committee has also identified the following examples of barriers to accessible customer service:

- Lack of Awareness (e.g., not knowing how to communicate with a person with a disability);
- Attitudinal (e.g., fear of or discomfort with interacting with a person with a disability);
- Arrangement of internal spaces (e.g., temporary floor displays);
- Policies and procedures (e.g., policies or guidelines that hinder the provision of customer service to persons with disabilities) (2006).

Definition of Barriers

Under the AODA, ‘barrier’ means anything that prevents a person with a disability from participating in all aspects of society because of his or her disability. The barriers may be physical, architectural, informational, communicational, attitudinal, technological or a barrier to policies, procedures or practices. An example from the AODA of each of the different kinds of barriers is shown below.

Barrier Type	Example
Physical	A door knob that cannot be operated by a person with limited upper-body mobility and strength.
Architectural	A hallway or door that is too narrow for a wheelchair or scooter.
Informational	Typefaces that are too small to be read by a person with low-vision.
Communicational	A professor who talks loudly when addressing a deaf student.
Attitudinal	A receptionist who ignores a customer in a wheelchair.
Technological	A paper tray on a laser printer that requires two strong hands to open.
Policy/Practice	A practice of announcing important messages over an intercom that people with hearing impairments cannot hear clearly.

The definition for disability under the AODA is:

- Any degree of physical disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement that is caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, includes diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, a brain injury, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical co-ordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog or other animal or on a wheelchair or other remedial appliance or device.
- A condition of mental impairment or a developmental disability.
- A learning disability or a dysfunction in one or more of the processes involved in understanding or using symbols or spoken language.
- A mental disorder, or
- An injury or disability for which benefits were claimed or received under the insurance plan established under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.²

² http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/05a11_e.htm accessed May 30, 2006

Potential Solutions to Overcoming Barriers to Accessible Customer Service

AS STATED IN MINUTES OF THE AODA CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON MARCH 22 AND 23, 2006

Attitudinal:

- Large organizations – champion behaviour (i.e. Sensitivity Awareness Training)
- Training/learning/stating expectations
- Performance contracts – make accessibility part of organizational culture
- Sharing information
- Public information campaigns
- Dedicate well trained/attuned employees until retraining or performance management processes meet standards

Awareness:

- Booklet – “May I Help You?”
- Inventory of books, examples and resources
- Education sessions
- Self-evaluation (before and after)

Communication and Information:

- Voice recognition software (no equivalent/alternative service)
- Options available for visually impaired:
 - ◇ Instructions and directions
 - Verbal
 - Digital/electronic
 - Print/hard copy
 - Interactive voice response (telephone banking)
 - Verbal instructions (sales agreements)
 - Self-help options
 - Computer
 - Audio
 - Video
 - People

- ◇ Information options
 - Visual/Hearing/Learning
 - More than one option (audio, text/print, pictures, diagrams)

Physical, Non-Structural

- Sound (music, excess noise/activity)
 - ◇ don't locate fax/copier near public service area
 - ◇ reduce music in public places
- Aisle displays
- Area rugs (floor covering/surfaces)
- Shelving – placing products
- Organizing equipment
- Signage – clear, frequent, level, colours/contrast
- Theatres – seating for persons in wheel chairs and their caregivers
- Buying clothes and other things (chair in change room, chair near customer queues)³

Recent Initiatives

- An Accessibility Coordinator (Part-time), Centre for Access - Barrie was hired;
- Exterior accessibility audit completed at Kempenfelt Conference Centre;
- Additional Accessible parking spaces added to parking areas - Barrie;
- Textbooks were made available on CD;
- Architect was consulted re: Stair lifts Gryphon Theatre, Barrie and improving entrances to the Orillia Campus main building;
- Centre for Access staff and representatives from Human Resources, Senior Management, and Faculty attended Sensitivity Awareness Training in Barrie to pilot customer service standards;
- Accessibility Coordinator revised audit templates to reflect the Ontario Building Code and the Canadian Standards Association requirements.

³ http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/accessibility/en/main/CS_SDC_minutes-MAR.htm accessed May 30, 2006
 Can now be found at
http://www.mcss.gov.on.ca/mcss/english/pillars/accessibilityOntario/what/custser_min_mar.htm
 accessed October 18, 2006

Results of 2006 – 2007 Accessibility Audits

The audit committee was comprised of Centre for Access staff who utilized the revised audit template. The revision of this template include the Ontario Building Code and Canadian Standards Association requirements. The Accessibility Coordinator also used personal observations in the auditing process.

Barriers to be Addressed

All Campuses (in priority order)

1. Colour contrasting on the nosings of all steps of all staircases;
2. Library Commons – widen bookshelf aisles to a minimum of 920 mm (36 in.), with a 90 degree turning radius at the end of each aisle; provide accessible computer stations, and develop policy/procedure for assisting students with disabilities;
3. College web site – add Clear Print recommendations and follow W3C guidelines;
4. Communication and Information – produce all pamphlets, brochures, and maps in alternative formats;
5. Revise all relevant policies and procedures to meet customer service requirements from the Canadian Standards Association (B480-02);
6. Campus maps – add accessible washrooms, elevators, and parking to all maps;
7. Provide Sensitivity Awareness Training for all College personnel.

Barrie Campus (in priority order)

1. Require an accessible entrance: add an automatic door opener, use colour contrasting paint, and install guardrail – adjacent to the accessible parking (lot 1) Alumni Hall / Founders Building;
2. Colour contrasting paint and guardrail required south/east side entrance – Founders Building;
3. Two accessible computer stations required – Testing Services;
4. Add a minimum of 4 computer stations in Centre for Access computer lab – (usage has increased by more than 150% over the past two years).

Kempfenfelt Conference Centre (in priority order)

1. Add exterior ramp and/or lift - main entrance;
2. Add curb cut—main entrance;
3. Replace/fix and add accessible parking;
4. Install exterior directional (way-finding) signage;
5. Replace all interior signage (Clear Print design, colour contrast);
6. Make washrooms accessible (male and female).

Orillia Campus (in priority order)

1. Cafeteria – all barriers (to prevent falling from one level to another) need to be anchored;
2. Improve accessibility to campus from public transportation stop;
3. Provide two accessible computer stations – Testing Services;
4. Provide six accessible computer stations – Centre for Access Lab;
5. Remove three seats in the theatre to create accessible wheelchair space;
6. Cafeteria – install a ramp to allow access to the second level;
7. Cafeteria – install guard/handrail to stairwell near south door;
8. Cafeteria – add a continuous tray holder.

Owen Sound

1. Cost out approximately 300 feet of sidewalk to bus shelter, or relocate bus stop adjacent to accessible building entrance;

Distribution of Accessibility Plan

Copies of the Accessibility Plan will be made available through the Marketing and Communications Department, all Georgian College campuses through Campus Connections, on the College's web site, and through regular updates on the College Capsule. The plan will be made available in alternative formats, such as: CD, tapes, in large print, or in Braille, upon request.

Implementation of 2006-2007 Accessibility Plan

Georgian College is committed to the identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to meet AODA standards and create a fully accessible environment for all. At the same time we must work within our limited financial resources to phase in accessibility standards.

During the initial five year phase, Georgian College will strive to achieve compliance with the AODA by addressing the findings of the accessibility audits.

Georgian College is committed to taking a proactive approach to accessibility. This year, Georgian will explore the possibility of creating partnerships with governments and the private sector that would allow Georgian, over time, to become a prototype for barrier-free design.

Summary

The AODA, when enacted, includes standards that must be met, as well as penalties for not adhering or complying with these standards.

As Georgian College strives to be a leader in its field, implementing our accessibility plan will benefit not only persons with disabilities, but the College community at large.